and former Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the roundtable participants.

Remarks at the Hubert H. Humphrey Civil Rights Award Dinner

May 11, 1999

Thank you so very much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the warm welcome. Thank you, Dorothy, for your wonderful words. She has been involved in this work for many years, but every time I hear her speak I always marvel at how young and vigorous and alive and energetic she always sounds.

I'm honored to be here with Wade Henderson; Julian Bond; Rabbi Saperstein; Monsignor East; my good friend, Justin Dart; Frances Humphrey Howard, it's nice to see you tonight, ma'am. I also want to—I have been told that Judy Shepard is here, the mother of Matthew Shepard, and she testified for the hate crimes legislation today. I don't know where she is, but I'd like to ask her to stand up—and I thank you. Where is she? Thank you very much, and God bless you. Thank you. [*Applause*]

I would like to thank the members of the administration who are here: Secretary Herman; our EEOC Chair, Ida Castro; our Civil Rights Assistant Attorney General, Bill Lann Lee; Ben Johnson, who is continuing the work of our initiative on race at the White House; and Mary Beth Cahill and others on the White House staff. I thank them.

I would also like to say a special word of appreciation to the many Members of the Congress who are here, well over a dozen House Members, and Senator Wellstone, Senator Sarbanes, and Senator Robb. I thank all of them for being here and for what they do. If it weren't for them, many of the things we have tried to do in the area of civil rights and human rights would not have been sustained in these last few years.

When I saw Senator Robb's name here, it reminded me before I give out this Hubert Humphrey Award—or acknowledge the award winners, you're going to give it out—I admired Hubert Humphrey very much, and I grew up just being almost crazy about him because I grew up in the South during the civil rights revolution. And I got to meet him when I was a young man and when he was making his last campaign and during his latter service in the Senate, after he had been Vice President.

But I would like to say something I have rarely had the chance to say as President, but I don't think I would be here doing this, or we would be where we are as a country if it had not been for the President Hubert Humphrey served, Lyndon Johnson, and I think that we should never forget that. I just got back from Texas a few days ago, and I was thinking about it quite a lot down there.

I want to congratulate the Hubert Humphrey Award winners tonight: Gary Locke, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Jeannie Van Velkinburgh, who I know is back in the hospital tonight and couldn't be with us.

We honor these people because of something Dr. King once said, ''No social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability.'' You all know they are pushed forward by courageous men and women who give themselves and inspire others to follow. People like my good friend, Governor Gary Locke, who has used the power of his office to expand and defend opportunity for all the people of his State. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, who together for 50 years have advanced the cause of civil rights through their art and through their efforts to open the theater and movies to people of all backgrounds. And Jeannie Van Velkinburgh, who stood with the white martyrs of the civil rights movement in the South when she was paralyzed in 1997, trying to help a black man under attack by skinheads. All true American heroes. I know we are honored to be in their presence tonight. I congratulate them on their awards, and I congratulate you for your choices.

For nearly half a century, the Leadership Conference has helped hundreds of diverse groups keep their eyes on the prize and speak with one booming voice. Today, your voice is louder, larger, and more diverse than ever. And that is good, because it is still sorely needed. While our economy has never been stronger and minority unemployment is the lowest it has been since separate measurements have been kept, there are still striking

disparities in income, wealth, jobs, education, and criminal justice that breakdown along what DuBois called ''the color line,'' and other disparities that affect people who are disabled or people who are gay. In other words, we still have quite a little hill to climb before we can claim to be the one America of our Founders' dreams.

I was thinking today how I could best honor the spirit of Hubert Humphrey. I could give a long speech. [*Laughter*] I should tell you, if he were here at this podium tonight and I was out there, I would want him to give a long speech. I loved his long speeches. But I think what I will do instead is to try to make briefer comments in the spirit of his service about just three things we still need to do before we cross that bridge into a new century.

First, we must continue to work together for a fair and accurate census. I agree with Wade when he says the 2000 census is a civil rights issue. It is a fundamental building block of democracy. We have to make sure the Census Bureau can do its job with the most up-to-date and scientific methods. We all say we live for the day when every American counts as much as every other American. Surely, that day must begin with counting every American.

The second thing we have to do is to close the economic opportunity gaps that still exist among our people, in our inner-cities, our smaller and medium-sized towns, our rural areas, and on our Native American reservations. There will never be a better time for us to shine the light of economic opportunity on communities and neighborhoods that have been too long in the shadows. We do have the strongest economy in a generation, perhaps in this century. But we know—we know—that there are still large numbers of communities that have been left out and left behind.

Just an hour ago I returned from Atlanta—I think Congressman Lewis is here—but I toured the Sweet Auburn Market in Martin Luther King's home neighborhood, in Atlanta's empowerment zone with the mayor of Atlanta, Bill Campbell, and two of his predecessors, who are friends of many of yours, Maynard Jackson and Andy Young.

I was there to highlight the fact that our greatest untapped markets today for America are not overseas, they are right here at home. There's an $85 billion consumer market out there that is grossly underdeveloped. Ever since we took office, Vice President Gore and I have worked hard to try to get more people to invest in that part of America, with the empowerment zone program, the community development financial institution effort, special initiatives from HUD, from SBA, from the Department of Labor. And we have had some good success.

But as I look back on it, even now, with unemployment at 4.3 percent, with over 18 million new jobs, there are still inner-city neighborhoods, there are still medium-sized and smaller communities, there are still rural towns, there are still Native American reservations where there has been almost no new investment in job creation.

And what I am attempting to do this year is to convince the Congress to pass legislation and the American business community to mobilize to invest in those communities to create jobs there. I took some of the biggest business leaders in America today to that market in Atlanta. And I let them sit there with me and we listened to people talk about how they started their coffee shop and their bakery and their restaurant and how one man had bought an empty old mill and was converting it to 500 apartments and how a young man who was a supplier to other businesses had taken his business from $150,000 a year to $12 million a year in 3 years, starting with a modest loan.

And in July, in early July, I'm going to take 3 days and do what I did today in Atlanta. I'm going to go across the country, to the poorest communities and to some places where a lot of good things are happening, to demonstrate why we need to have a national framework to give every community a chance to get the money it needs to start the businesses, to expand the businesses, to create the jobs, to stabilize the future.

Our proposal is very straightforward: We want to double the number of empowerment zones where people get tax credits, loan guarantees, direct investment, and technical assistance. We want to dramatically increase the number of community development

banks, but we want to pass a national new markets initiative that simply says we want to give business people and investors the same incentives to invest in poor American neighborhoods we give them to invest in our neighbors. We don't want to take those other incentives away. We want to grow the Caribbean economies. We want to grow the Central American economies. We want to encourage Americans to be involved in Africa, and we want a new partnership there. But we also believe that Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, south Texas, and the Indian reservations of the high plains should get new American money now. So I would ask you to help me pass this legislation.

The third thing I ask you to do is to help us pass the hate crimes prevention act this year. In 1997, the year Jeannie Van Velkinburgh and Oumar Dia were brutally attacked by skinheads, more than 8,000 hate crimes were reported in the United States. That's nearly one an hour. The hearings today that Mrs. Shepard testified at were held in the United States Senate by the Judiciary Committee, under the leadership of Senator Hatch. First, I commend Senator Hatch for holding those hearings, they are a welcome sign—surely the goodness we can make fighting hate crimes a bipartisan, even a nonpartisan mission of the United States of America.

I think we need to be clear about what our legislation is designed to do. It is not an effort to federalize crimes traditionally handled by the States. It is an effort to partner with local authorities. And it is not only about cracking down on hate crimes committed because of sexual orientation, gender, or disability. It's also about expanding civil rights protection for all Americans. Let's never forget what happened to James Byrd, Jr. in Texas. I met with his daughter in Austin, just a few days ago. She's down there trying to get the Texas legislature to pass State hate crimes legislation. We ought to be pulling for her and for the Texas legislators who are trying to get the job done, and we ought to remember that we also need it here in Washington.

So I say to you, we need to do this for all Americans. We need to make the hate crimes prevention act and the employment nondiscrimination act the law of the land, because it will help us to move toward one America, and it will help us to make a statement about what we are not, as well as what we are.

I was honored to appear at a testimonial banquet for Rabbi Saperstein the other night. We've been friends for many years. I love and admire him very much. And I especially appreciate how hard he's worked for peace in the Middle East and how hard he's worked to protect the heritage and the historical rights of the Israeli people and still be fair and humane toward the Arabs, with whom they share that land.

And I make this point for the following reason. It seems to me that the central irony of our time is that most of us have a vision of America in the 21st century and the world in the 21st century in which we'll all be mixed up in wonderful ways. We'll have all this fabulous technology, and we'll be E-mailing people on the South Pole or wherever. [*Laughter*] Our kids will have pen-pals in Africa and Mongolia. We'll jet around on airplanes and do business with people at the tip of Tierra del Fuego. [*Laughter*] Our kids will speak Japanese and Russian; one of them will solve the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh. We think this is what it's going to be like. It's going to be great.

We just had this NATO Summit here. We had the leaders of 42 countries here, all the way to central Asia; speaking all these different languages because we see that the world is drawing us closer together. Technology and commerce and culture all bringing us together. And most of us think it will really be neat if America can thrive in that kind of world because we're rapidly becoming the most diverse democracy ever known. And won't it be grand? That's the image we all have. That's the dream we have.

And yet, our whole world is bedeviled by the oldest problem of human society, which is fear and hatred of the other. We have known it in America primarily as the curse of race. Although we see discrimination and cruelty against people who are gay, discrimination against people who are disabled, we see it in other manifestations. We occasionally see religious discrimination in America. But primarily we have known it as race.

And yet, we see it everywhere. Hillary wanted to come here tonight to pay her respects to the honorees, but she got on a plane today to continue years of work she has done in Ireland, to try to use women and children to bring together people across the lines of Catholic and Protestant Irish. And then she's going on to the refugee camps of Albania and Macedonia, to clarify our compassion and concern for the predominantly Muslim Kosovar Albanians who have been driven from their homes and female loved ones murdered.

The bane of the Balkans is primarily a religious ethnic bane. First, the Bosnian Muslims, but now the Kosovar Muslims driven from their homes, systematically killed, raped, pillaged, their cultural and religious institutions and records destroyed. Why? Because they have been turned into something sub-human and so they somehow taint the land they share with the Serbs or the Croats or others.

We saw with breathtaking speed what happened in Rwanda a few years ago, the world totally caught flat-footed with no mechanism to deal with the slaughter of Rwanda, where somewhere between 700,000 and 900,000 people were killed in 100 days with no modern weapons, mostly hacked to death, because two African tribes who, in this case, who had shared the same land for 500 years, all of a sudden decided that they couldn't bear it anymore.

I hope you support what we are doing in Kosovo and what we did in Bosnia. I want you to know that we also have worked to redeem the failure of the world to stop the slaughter in Rwanda by developing an Africa Crisis Response Team, working with the militaries of the countries in the region that are committed to democracy and human rights, so that, God forbid, if anything like this ever happens again we, in the United States, and other freedom-loving people around the world, will have Africans with whom we can work to move more quickly to stop genocide, to stop ethnic cleansing, to not let it happen again.

But what I want to say to you is this: There will be fights around the world based on ethnic differences that we won't be able to stop. Sometimes people just fall out with one another. But if we want to at least be able to stand firm against ethnic cleansing, against genocide, and for the principle that it is possible to honor our differences, to enjoy our differences, to recognize our differences, and still keep them contained within the framework of our common humanity so that life is more interesting but not unbearable; if that's what we want, and we expect people to take the United States seriously at a time when we are easy to resent because of our economic and military power, then people have to see us not only trying to do good around the world but trying to be good at home.

You know, many of these people are struggling. Macedonia and Albania, the two poorest countries in Europe—think how easy it is for all of them to resent us, to say, ''Well, we're just waiting for our turn in history's clock to bring us to the top and take them down,'' to resent our power, to resent our wealth, to resent what they may think of as our preaching. I am telling you, it's imperative that we do this at this moment in history. But if we want to be a force for good, we have got to be good.

So when we stand up for the hate crimes legislation, when we stand up for the employment nondiscrimination legislation, when we stand up as a people and say that it's okay for us to have differences—and we're not even asking everybody to like everybody else in America—but we have got to find a way to get along by recognizing the fundamental human dignity of every person. We have got to find a way to do that so that we take advantages that are rife with all of our diversity by joining together in affirming our common humanity.

Keep in mind, unless we can do that here at home, in the end, we will not be able to do that around the world. And our whole vision of the 21st century—our whole vision—what we want our children to see in the world of their dreams depends upon our being able to do both: to stand for what is good abroad and to keep struggling to be good at home. That's what our honorees have led us in doing. It is certainly what you have led us in doing. Don't get tired. We've still got a ways to go.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:15 p.m. in the International Ball Room at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Dorothy, Height, chair, Wade Henderson, executive director, and Rabbi David Saperstein, executive committee member, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; Julian Bond, chairman of the board, NAACP; Monsignor Raymond G. East, pastor, Nativity Catholic Church, Washington, DC; award presenter Justin Dart, Jr.; Frances Humphrey Howard, sister of Hubert Humphrey; Judy Shepard, mother of Matthew Shepard who was murdered in a hate crime in Wyoming in 1998; award recipients Gov. Gary Locke of Washington, actors Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Jeannie Van Velkinburgh, who was shot while aiding a hate crime victim in Denver, CO, in 1997; Renee Mullins, daughter of James Byrd, Jr., who was murdered in a hate crime in Texas in 1998; and former mayors Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young of Atlanta, GA.

Remarks Announcing the Proposed "21st Century Law Enforcement Safety Act"

May 12, 1999

Thank you very much. Please be seated; and good afternoon. Madam Attorney General, Mr. Holder, Officer Hall, Senator Leahy, Congressman Stupak, Senator Biden, Senator Specter. There are now over 50 Members of Congress here, I think; at least that many had accepted to come. And we see our mayor there, Mayor Williams; Mayor Schmoke; Mayor Rendell, and other officials: Associate Attorney General Fisher; Treasury Under Secretary Enforcement Jim Johnson; and the Director of our COPS Office, Joe Brann. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here today, and welcome.

Five years ago this summer, after a remarkable effort in Congress which required, among other things, the breaking of an intense filibuster, with the support of many of the people here today, I was able to sign into law a crime bill that was the first of its kind: a comprehensive bill that funded local solutions to local problems and enhanced the promising practice of community policing; a bill that also banned assault weapons and demanded tougher punishment for the toughest criminals and provided innovative prevention strategies to keep our young people out of trouble in the first place.

It was a crime bill that brought our laws into line with our oldest values, requiring all of us to take responsibility at every level of government and every community in America to prevent crime and protect our families. I'd like to say a special word of thanks to Senator Biden who is here today for his extraordinary efforts in what seems like, at once, a long time ago and only yesterday.

Today we know that the strategy embodied in the crime bill, which was really written by local police officers and law enforcement officials, is working. The murder rate is down to its lowest level in 30 years; violent crime has dropped 20 percent in the last 6 years alone; and in many smaller ways, reducing crimes like vandalism and littering that undermine the quality of life. We are beginning to repair the social fabric and restore civility to everyday life.

There are many reasons for this success. The Brady bill has stopped over 250,000 illegal handgun sales to felons, fugitives, and stalkers. The assault weapons ban has helped; so have tougher penalties and the waning of the devastating crack epidemic.

But police chiefs, politicians, and people on the street all agree that the most important factor has been community policing. After all, until the crime bill passed, the violent crime had tripled over the preceding 30 years, but the size of our police forces had increased by only 10 percent. Where police officers, therefore, used to cruise anonymously through the streets, now community police officers walk the beat and know the people in the neighborhoods, becoming involved in the lives of the people they protect and involving them in the fight against crime.

Community policing has worked miracles in many of our cities, where violent crime once was out of control and law-abiding citizens mistrusted police often as much as they feared gangs. Now, in cities and communities all across America, residents work with police officers forming neighborhood watches, banding together against drug dealers, building connections that are the core of community life and the heart of civil society.

When I signed the crime bill I pledged to help communities all over our Nation fund